



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Consumer Affairs Director Assails Unlicensed Activity in California

Asks Consumers for Help in Rooting Out State's Illegal Operators

LOS ANGELES — California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Director Carrie Lopez today asked California consumers to help put an end to unlicensed activity – where individuals practice a trade or profession without being properly licensed.

Lopez, kicking off the Professionals Achieving Consumer Trust (PACT) Summit at the Los Angeles Airport Westin today, said DCA is committed to uncovering unlicensed activity in California, and urged Californians to make sure the people they hire and businesses they patronize have the proper licenses.

“The value of the California professional and trade license cannot be overstated,” said Lopez. “For licensees, it ensures they compete on a level playing field. For consumers, a license assures them that licensees meet competency standards. And consumers have a means of seeking recourse if they receive unsatisfactory goods or services.”

Over the last several days, DCA licensing agencies have conducted a number of sting operations in Southern California and discovered a number of people and businesses operating illegally.

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DCA investigates as many as 12,500 unlicensed activity complaints a year. In the second quarter of this year – in just five of DCA’s more than 40 Boards, Bureaus and other regulatory programs – nearly 2,200 incidents of unlicensed activity were uncovered.

Over the years, DCA has found a number of instances where illegal operators did serious harm to consumers. For example:

- In Anaheim, the operator of a rehabilitation program for neurologically disabled children was providing physical therapy without a license, allegedly injuring a four-year-old child.
- In Sacramento, a man posing as a contractor took the entire life savings of an elderly couple and disappeared, leaving them \$253,000 in the hole and their home in ruins.
- In San Jose, an unlicensed cosmetologist pleaded no contest to 11 felony and misdemeanor charges for conducting illegal plastic surgery and assisting a man who disfigured several victims while performing surgery without a license.

These cases are among the most serious. But others, while less dramatic, are also potentially damaging to the health and safety of consumers.

What’s more, unlicensed activity hurts an already battered economy. Many of the people who do not have the proper trade or professional licenses also don’t have business licenses, sales tax permits and other licenses, depriving state and local governments of badly-needed revenue. And too often, the work they do is shoddy and has to be re-done, hurting the pocketbooks of consumers.

Ms. Lopez appealed to California’s consumers for help in routing out illegal operators.

“We know our efforts at DCA are just the tip of the iceberg,” said Lopez. The only way to stop these scofflaws is for consumers to ‘inquire before you hire.’ ”

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Lopez urged Californians to visit the DCA Web page dedicated to unlicensed activity at <http://www.inquirebeforeyouhire.ca.gov>. Consumers can report unlicensed activity by e-mailing StopULA@dca.ca.gov, or calling (877) STOPULA, or (877) 786-7852. Complaints can also be forwarded to the department by fax at (916) 574-8672, or by mail at:

Department of Consumer Affairs
Attn: Unlicensed Activity Program
1625 N. Market Blvd., Suite S-202
Sacramento, CA 95834

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